



The Lost King of France : The Tragic Story of Marie-Antoinette's Favourite Son

By Deborah Cadbury

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A true story of royalty, revolution and mystery - the detective story of the brief life and many possible deaths of Louis XVII, the son of Marie Antoinette. Louis-Charles Bourbon enjoyed a charmed early childhood in the gilded palace of Versailles. At the age of four, he became the Dauphin, heir to the most powerful throne in Europe. Yet within five years, he was to lose everything. Drawn into the horror of the French Revolution, his family was incarcerated and their fate thrust into the hands of the revolutionaries who wished to destroy the monarchy. In 1793, when his mother was beheaded at the guillotine, she left her adored eight-year-old son imprisoned in the Temple Tower. Far from inheriting a throne, the orphaned boy-King had to endure the hostility and abuse of a nation. Two years later, the Revolutionary leaders declared Louis XVII was dead. No grave was dug, no monument built to mark his passing. Immediately, rumours spread that the Prince had, in fact, escaped from prison and was still alive. Others believed that he had been murdered, his heart cut out and preserved as a relic. In time, his older sister, Marie-Therese, who survived the Revolution, was approached by countless "brothers" who claimed not only his name, but also his inheritance. Several "princes" were plausible, but which, if any, was the real Louis-Charles? This work interweaves a pivotal moment in France's history with a compelling detective story involving pretenders to the crown, royalist plots and bizarre legal battles. The quest for the truth finally runs to the present day. Using modern DNA testing, the strange odyssey of a stolen heart found within the royal tombs was to lead to an exciting conclusion to the 200-year-old mystery of the lost King of France.

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